

devils roll the dice by stardustupinlights

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Summary:

A collection of daily drabbles to make February all the more exciting.

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1. "Are you afraid to die?"

Author's Note:

me and haley aka anxious_tofu decided we should practice writing short things. so here is that lmao

Percy glances down at Lester. "You can't sleep either?"

The stars outside of the Aeithales are shining and perhaps it should be a cool night, but Helios raging under their feet keeps them sweating. He drops down beside Apollo on the dirt, following his gaze to the sky, as well, and decides he might as well just exist in this moment with him.

"It hurts," Apollo whispers, several minutes after Percy's sat down. He's clutching his chest, where Medea's plug was replaced with aloe vera, and Percy has to reach out and grab his wrist because the last thing he wants is to have Apollo start bleeding on him again. He couldn't stand that after Jason. "It really, really hurts."

"Of course it does," Percy sighs, tired, but unable to rest, squeezing Apollo's wrist in his hand. "You tried to kill yourself, dude. Shit like that usually hurts."

"It's not that part that hurts," Apollo frowns, and his lip wobbles, but he's already cried so much today, Percy doesn't think he has a single tear left. "It's—it's not the physical that hurts, Perseus."

Ah. Well, he can relate. "It's supposed to hurt like that, too. That's also normal."

"How can you live like this?" Apollo asks, sniffing. He turns his eyes on Percy and they're wet; perhaps he'll be proven wrong about the tears. "This, just—constantly scared? Knowing your life will end? Knowing the life of the people you love will end?"

“Are you afraid to die?” Percy asks back, watching Apollo flinch at the question. “You are, aren't you?”

“Of course,” Apollo rubs his eyes and bites his lip, shaking his head. “Perseus, you might find this difficult to believe, but gods are *always* afraid of dying. Death is terrifying. It might be a nebulous concept to us but there's a reason we *avoid* thinking about it, rise ourselves up instead. How do *you* do it, knowing everything will end? Knowing you'll be dust in a couple decades, maybe even less than that?”

Percy swallows. “That's exactly why we just live, Apollo. We know our time is limited. It's that simple.”

“And when someone you love dies,” Apollo repeats, and this time, his tears start falling. He's clutching his chest with his other hand now, and Percy has no better idea than to pull him in and hug him, letting him press his face against his shoulder. He will never admit he might be tearing up as well. “What do you do when someone you love dies?”

He seems to be speaking from someplace deeper, someplace Percy doesn't quite get. It's easy to forget Lester is actually a four-thousand-years-old god, trapped in flesh and bone. That he's loved and lost before. Percy would be lying if he said he's never stopped to think about how miserable and cruel immortality truly is, watching everyone you've ever cared for, the people that watched you grow and nurtured you, succumb to age, or sickness, or considering his world, to a monster or a god or a war.

But he had never stopped to consider what effect that might have on you in the long run, if you have to watch it happen several times over, if your very nature makes you somewhat distant from the situation. What Apollo must have felt, having all that grief be relieved from its shackles to attack his newly weak, mortal mind, his already sensitive emotions even closer to the surface.

Percy doesn't have an answer for him, not for what his real question is, and he admits this. “I'm sorry, Apollo. I don't know. You just... you just have to keep going, somehow. You just have to move on.”

Apollo sobs harder. Percy's chest aches in sympathy and also with his own grief, thinking of Jason again.

Their hands meet and cling to each other in the space between their chest, and Percy closes his eyes, letting himself feel, just like Apollo is right now.

They sit under the stars together like this for what seems like hours. Percy cries himself until his eyes are sore, and Apollo wipes his tears even as his own keep pouring. Percy's heart beats wildly in his chest and something about this is so, so strange, so out of the ordinary, and yet it makes so much sense. It makes him feel so much better.

"Please, Apollo," Percy whispers against Apollo's shoulders, not ashamed of having somehow ended up the little spoon. Apollo holds him tighter in acknowledgement. "Please, don't forget about this feeling."

"Human grief," Apollo says, nodding, sniffing. He truly could cry a river and Percy has no idea how he manages it. "I made a promise, Perseus. To Jason. I will not forget."

Percy closes his eyes, and finally feels sleep pulling him away, his awareness diminishing. "Good. Thank you."

"Thank *you* , Perseus," Apollo sighs, and he starts saying something else, but Percy is already long gone.

When they wake up the next morning, they're sweaty and disgusting and Meg points it out without a single lick of shame. Percy ruffles her hair in retaliation, and watching the resulting wobbly, tentative smile on Apollo's lips feels like a victory.

2. Things you said too quietly.

Notes for the Chapter:

day 2 for me let's gooooooooo

i promise i'll write something fluffier. eventually.

“I love you,” Percy mumbles, his face pressed against the space between Lester’s shoulder blades. It hurts to say it, immensely so, but relief washes through his body. In answer, all Apollo does is snort in his sleep and turn—or, just tries to, because Percy squeezes himself closer, not letting him go.

They’re heading back to New York. Percy can hardly believe that it’s been six months since Apollo showed up at his door, beaten up with an ego taller than the Empire State itself. Six months since Percy resigned himself to another quest, only to end up falling head over heels for Apollo.

It feels like their time together is ending, in a way. He knows deep in his heart that Apollo will succeed, that he’ll get his godhood back, a hunch that’s been there since the very first day, and when that happens there’s no telling of whether Apollo will stay or not. It’s one thing to share kisses in the dark, to fool around with one another when no one is looking, to find little moments to hold on to as they travel.

It’s one thing to date Lester, and it’s another to date Apollo. Yet, Percy would do it. He would risk it. He wants Apollo by his side at the end, so, so badly, he can feel tears prickling his eyes. He squeezes them shut and presses even closer against Apollo, wraps himself around him even harder.

“I love you,” he can’t say it to Apollo’s face, Percy can’t do that to him when this quest is hanging over Apollo, but this will do, for now, whispered in the dark. Quiet and easy and with no confrontation. “Gods, I love you.”

“Hm, what?”

Percy freezes. His heart starts racing. He presses his eyes shut and tries to act as lack as possible as Apollo stirs, clearly waking up. He begs that his enhanced hearing isn't working as well, that he doesn't hear him quietly panicking.

"Percy?" He calls, his voice groggy from sleep. When he fails to answer, Apollo sighs. "Are you awake? I thought I heard someone talk..."

I did, Percy's mind screams, but he remains frozen. The words he whispered are still on the tip of his tongue, and right now he feels so, so fucking weak.

If Apollo turned and looked at him with those simultaneously ancient and young blue eyes, if he reverently held his face in his hands like he usually does, caressing his skin like it's the eighth wonder of the world—everything would come crashing down. Every feeling Percy keeps under his skin, from the fear to the insurmountable love in his chest, would pour from him like a river.

But the moment passes. Apollo sighs, shifts, but stays where he is. The silence grows and lingers and slowly, Percy relaxes, allowing himself to truly try to sleep, now that temptation is far, far away.

As Percy slips into unconsciousness, he hears a mumble coming from Apollo.

Percy allows himself to dream about the words being *I love you too*.

3. "You remind me of someone I once knew."

Notes for the Chapter:

Tough day, uploading from my phone, tunnel vision but recovering

Among the flowers, Percy turns his head away and stretches out, all long bronze limbs, broad shoulders, that tanned back. His whole being screams peace and balance, and for a second, when the light shifts just right, Apollo is sent back thousands of years.

Dark curls, enchanting eyes, miles of skin and laughter like a musical whistle cutting through the air turning into the calling of inspiration and love and yearning.

Apollo's breath catches and it bears down on him, the memories, the feeling of being ancient. Like a maleficent curse, inevitable in its strike, Apollo smells blood and sees it pooling on the grass under Percy's skin, staining the flowers, filling his long with bittersweet unfairness.

"Apollo?" Percy calls, and just like that he snaps back to the present, blinking. Percy's face is pulled into a concerned frown, and like he's just another beautiful mirage, he leans in until all Apollo can see is those ocean green eyes, and the start of a sob chokes his throat. "Gods, are you okay? What happened?"

"I'm sorry," Apollo chokes out, shaking his head, and the words are so heavy on his tongue that he wonders if he's truly all back, because his tone rings similar enough to when he held his dying heart in his arms. Percy goes from concerned to scared, and Apollo clears his throat, running a hand through Percy's hair. "Sorry, it's just... sometimes, Perseus, all in the universe aligns so perfectly I can hardly believe it."

Percy tilts his head. "Meaning?"

"You remind me of someone I once knew," Apollo whispers, taking a deep breath. "Someone beautiful, and kind, and brave, who swept me off my feet

just as much as you have.”

“Oh,” Percy lets out, body going lax. His worry and fear shifts to understanding, and then he's pulling Apollo closer, brushing their lips together as he slides on to his lap. “You're thinking of *him*, aren't you?”

“Yes,” Apollo confirms, swallowing. Percy's fingers tangle in his golden curls, and Apollo feels like a delicate glass in the safest hands that have ever existed. “I hope you can forgive me for getting so... taken away.”

“Of course,” Percy shakes his head like the thought of being upset about it is unthinkable. “I know those thoughts creep on you.”

“Still,” Apollo insists, because he needs this, and Percy probably knows this, because he just listens. “But you're the one I love, and the one I want, here, now, tomorrow, forever, only Hades freezing over and Oureanos descending from the sky could tear me from you.”

Percy laughs, soft, but evidently flattered. “I love you too.”

“I love you more,” Apollo refutes, just to make Percy's skin blush darker. He closes his eyes for a second, breathing in the scent of sea salt and heat, and sighs.

Apollo presses in and catches Percy's lips, hands at his waist, squeezing him tight. Percy smiles into it and pulls him closer, chests pressed together, and it takes Apollo no thought to push him back down. Over the flowers, crushing them with their weight, Percy's legs spread around him and his skin *begging* for his touch...

The past is the past, and Apollo knows the present will be, too, one day. The difference now is that he's learned to appreciate it. So he takes Percy among the flowers, burning his lips on his skin, his name on his tongue, and allows himself to love.

4. "Part of me is inside you."

Notes for the Chapter:

Finally...fluffier

When Percy wakes up, it's to Apollo's forehead pressed to the back of his neck. He's sweaty, hotter than usual, and with a groan he shifts in bed until he's able to turn around, running his hands over Apollo's skin.

"Morning," he mumbles, only to get a single groan as a response. Still with his eyes closed, Percy frowns. "You okay?"

Silence. Percy opens his eyes and has the shocking realization that Apollo has most definitely not gotten up from bed before him like he usually does. He's always up with the sun, after all. But all the blinds are closed, there's no music coming from the living room and no scent of fresh coffee filling his lungs.

"Apollo?" Percy asks, alarmed, sitting up and looking down at him. All Apollo does is grunt and bury his face against his pillow, a wrinkle on his brow, and Percy shakes him by the shoulder. "Holy shit, are you okay? What's wrong?"

"Headache," Apollo whispers, then winces as if he's in pain. Percy stares, dumbfounded. "Be quiet."

Oh gods. Apollo *hates* quiet. "How—you're a *god*. You don't get headaches."

Apollo doesn't answer, just stays where he is and ignores him. Percy is scrambling, not knowing what to do; should he call Artemis? Should he call Asclepius, or Leto? Zeus, even? Fuck. This isn't something they've ever done a contingency plan for. Apollo's a *god*. What the fuck?

He goes over the events of last night in his head as he runs a hand through Apollo's hair, feeling how feverishly hot he is—only even worse, because

he's the *sun god*. Fuck, is Apollo going to blow up? Shit. But still, Percy whacks his mind for a clue as to what's happening, remembering their movie date, the pizza they had, the wine, the way Apollo bent him over the coffee table and fucked him deep and hard enough Percy could still feel it all over his body. He blushes, remembering the things Apollo said last night, about filling him up like a whore, how eagerly he spread his legs and begged for cock.

Percy decides that those memories aren't helping and gets up, grabbing a random pair of boxers that he's pretty sure are Apollo's from the floor to get some clothes on him, and then grabbing water bottles he usually saves for swim training from his freezer and coming back into his bedroom.

He arranges Apollo to have a bottle under each of his arms and against his neck, another on his forehead—but he doesn't think this will work. The frozen water melts within minutes and Percy curses under his breath, mindful of how every sound makes Apollo wince.

Percy decides to stop and think, closing his eyes. He thinks about gods and illness from the myths, thinking of those books he wrote ages back, when his life looked a lot different. Didn't Zeus go through a headache too—?

Wait.

“Apollo,” Percy calls, a new, different kind of panic filling his head. “Oh my gods, Apollo.”

“Hm?” Apollo hums. He sounds irritated to have his pain interrupted. “What, love?”

“You're pregnant!”

Apollo sits up in alarm, finally opening his eyes, swaying. He stares at Percy with wide eyes. “Fuck.”

“How?!” Percy demands. “I thought you controlled that stuff!”

“I do!” Apollo exclaims, then winces, pressing his hand against his forehead. “I did?”

“Is it mine?” Percy demands, to which Apollo sputters and frowns, visibly offended.

“Of course it's yours!” Apollo shakes his head in betrayal. “Who else was calling me Daddy last night and begging for my dick? No one! How was I supposed to resist that? It was an accident, but it's definitely yours!”

Percy buries his face in his hands and laughs. “Oh my gods. A part of me is inside you, and you weren't even the one that got fucked.”

Apollo remains quiet for a few seconds, and then: “So, are we... sticking with this? Because I can get rid of—”

“Don't you dare,” Percy snaps at him and climbs into bed, over his lap, pressing their lips together. Once they're done kissing, Percy tangles his fingers in Apollo's hair and sighs. “I'm so ready for a baby. *Your* baby. Our baby.”

“I see,” Apollo says, eyes wet. Then, he clears his throat. “Well, about that...”

“What?”

“They're twins, I think.”

“Oh,” Percy blinks. He realizes they have literally not a single thing for babies, from a crib to clothes to toys, and then laughs. “Oh shit.”

Three hours later, Percy is holding two babies and Apollo is rubbing his head over the spot where Hephaestus cracked it open, hugging Percy from behind. He's still wearing only Apollo's yellow boxers.

“So,” Apollo starts, standing out a hand to run over the faces of their children, the girl yawning and the boy shifting. Percy's still crying, fat tears in his eyes. “Any name ideas?”

5. "I never stopped looking for you."

Notes for the Chapter:

shamelessly got this idea from haley. love u bestie.

“Apollo!”

Oh shit.

If there is one thing Apollo fears—other than water, trees, snakes, lighting bolts, ugly pants, cats, and the list goes on and on and on—it is Percy Jackson calling his name out like a curse, because that means he's in deep shit, and an angry Percy means no cuddles, and no cuddles means there will be rain for everyone, everywhere, because how could he smile without Percy's cuddles? How could he allow the sun to shine hot and bright if he didn't have his bae?

So he does the natural thing: Apollo jumps behind the couch just as Percy comes into the lounge at the Sun Palace, holding his breath. He listens to Percy walk around like he's scenting prey, and from underneath the couch, watches his feet stop right in front of it.

“Babe,” Percy says, his voice sharp. “Your boa is hanging over the backrest. I *know* you're there.”

“Fuck,” Apollo curses, sits up on his knees, and grins at Percy, crossing his arms over the backrest. He's frowning, looking pissed, holding a familiar fabric in his hands. “How is the source of light in my heart doing—?”

“Save it!” Percy snaps, and Apollo pouts, trying to use his best puppy eyes. Percy rolls his eyes, looking disgusted, just like everyone did whenever he tried that. “Care to explain this?”

Percy throws the fabric he is holding at him, covering his face. Apollo grabs it and extends it out. It's a hoodie, old and worn, that might have one day been a deep blue but now was faded and stained. It has a messy looking

scissor cut that shortened to what Apollo knows to be his midsection, and the sleeves are ripped out. On top of the right breast, the AHS logo seems to mock him.

Apollo clears his throat. "This is yours, I believe. Was."

"That," Percy elaborates, crossing his arms and practically vibrating in anger. "Was the hoodie I wore on our *first date* years ago! The same hoodie that mysteriously went missing two days later!"

"Well," Apollo says, barely reacting at how Percy viciously grabs the fabric out of his hands. "How long have you been looking for it, babe? Where did you find it?"

"I never stopped! It was in your stupid-ass walk-in closet!" Percy snaps at him again, and then looks down at his hoodie with teary eyes. "I never stopped looking for you. I'm so sorry you went through this."

Trying not to think of how that hoodie is receiving more pity than he ever got for having to face down three revived god-emperors, Apollo finally stands up and climbs over the couch, sitting on top of the backrest and leaning his elbows on his knees.

"I guess I should've told you I borrowed it," Apollo admits, and gets a sharp glare for his trouble. He winces. "I just didn't want to let you go, baby —"

"Then *why* ," Percy points an accusing finger at him, genuine tears in his eyes. "Would you turn it into a twink-worthy crop top? What is wrong with you? This was a memento from our date! Why did you decide to yassify it?!"

Apollo brings his hands up in defense. "It reminded me of you and I just wanted to make it cuter!"

"I used to sleep in this every night!" Percy protests, wiping his eyes. "I masturbated thinking of you while wearing this after that date!"

Oh wow. “Really? You know, I never washed it—”

“Oh my gods!” Percy throws the hoodie at him and Apollo falls backwards off the couch, to the floor. He whines, but all Percy does is storm out of the room. “I can’t believe you. I hate you.”

“Can I still get cuddles?” Apollo calls, hopeful. He *has* to try.

“No!” Percy yells. “Fuck you! You’re sleeping on the couch until next month!”

Aw, shit. He opens his mouth. “What about—?”

“No sex!”

Apollo stares down at the hoodie and considers repairing it with magic.

Instead, he takes off his silk robe and boa, puts the hoodie on, and goes to find Percy. He’ll *surely* change his mind when he sees him wearing it. After all, he looks amazing!

6. "I worship you."

Notes for the Chapter:

shamelessly inspired by august by taylor swift. if you want to viscerally feel this, listen to it.

"I don't understand it," Percy says, staring at the spot where Apollo's thigh is pressed against his own, skin against skin because they're at Montauk and in swimsuits, and the sun is burning his shoulders. "I can't wrap my head around it."

Apollo stops strumming his ukulele and looks at him, tilting his head. Under his sunglasses, his eyes are unreadable, but there's something about the curl of his mouth that speaks of uncertainty. "Around what?"

"You," Percy confesses, his voice barely above a whisper. Apollo seems to pause, even his breath stopping. Percy remembers that he doesn't really *need* the air, doesn't need to breathe, and a dull ache in his chest resurfaces, the one he hides under layers and layers of Apollo's love for him, that reminds him he will never truly comprehend him. "Just... you. You're more than what I'm seeing. You're more than I'll ever be."

"Where are you going with this?" Apollo asks. There's an edge of fear to his voice that Percy hates to be responsible for putting there, but he's been thinking about this ever since the very first kiss, earlier this spring. Has never spoken it out loud before.

"It's been a great summer," Percy lets out a humorless laugh, shaking his head. "The best summer of my life. I think—I don't think I'll ever love someone like I love you. Like I *worship* you."

Apollo stares at him, expression still hidden behind his sunglasses. "Do you think I'm with you just because of that?"

"No," Percy shakes his head, looking away from him, out at the sea. Sometimes, he wonders what his life would look like right now if he had

run away from everything, no memories, no anchors, when Juno gave him the chance to. Maybe he wouldn't have ever had Apollo, and he's not sure if that's better or worse. "If you were, you would've said so. It would've been evident. But it's just... how can you call yourself mine?"

"Because I am," Apollo lays his ukulele down, scooting even closer. His arm covers his sunburnt shoulders, but instead of it being a shield it just makes him more aware of the sting, of the heat, of who he is sitting with. Of who is taking his chin in his fingers and bringing his eyes back to his face, of who is looking at him with lips pulled down into a worried frown. "I am, Percy."

"You aren't," Percy leans his forehead against Apollo's, closing his eyes so he doesn't have to watch the shock in his frame, since he's already feeling it in his heart. "You aren't ever going to be anyone's."

"But maybe I want to be," Apollo runs a hand through Percy's hair, and he leans into the touch with a desperation, a need that brings tears to his eyes. He can't help but bring his hands up, touch Apollo's naked back, and cling like a baby. He digs his nails into his skin and wishes he could leave a mark there. "Doesn't that count for something?"

"It does," Percy nods, sniffing, ducking his head and pressing his nose to Apollo's neck. He smells of salt and sunscreen, of heat and summer sand. Percy wonders how much of that is his own doing. "I just don't know if that's enough."

"It's enough for me," Apollo says, his voice low, broken. He brings Percy closer and it burns him, inside and out, to be held like this. "Anything you want, it's enough for me. Wanting to be yours, however impossible that is... it's enough for me."

Percy laughs. "You have more hope than I do."

"Percy," Apollo presses the words against his ear, desperate and raw. He's begging, and Percy digs his nails even harder. "Please don't leave me."

“I don’t think I can,” Percy admits. “I don’t think I ever will. I don’t think I’ll ever want to. But I think I’ll lose you anyways.”

“I want to be yours,” Apollo insists. “You won’t lose me.”

Percy doesn’t answer. That’s a promise Apollo can’t make and he knows it. Every kiss, every whispered word he’s ever said has been coated with the knowledge that he *can’t* promise that. He can’t give him everything. And maybe one day he’ll be okay with that.

But for now, it’s August, he’s turning a year older. The sun is burning. And Percy isn’t okay with it at all.

7. "Now this feels like a waste of time."

"Well," Percy sighs, staring at the burning vehicle. "I guess we tried."

"When you told me you have an uncanny talent for chaos," Apollo starts, wrapping his arm around his shoulders. "I thought you just meant stuff like sending Medusa's head to Olympus when you were twelve. Not being on a date and randomly getting attacked by the Nemean lion."

"That was a good car too," Percy scratches his cheek and licks his lips, tasting blood on his tongue from the struggle with the lion. "You didn't have to blow it up."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Apollo snorts. "You only told me to shot the best shot of my, and I quote, *miserable archery career* since you're of the belief that my sister is better than me—"

"She is, for the record."

"—so can you blame me for panicking?" Apollo pauses and clicks his fingers. The fire dies, and all that is left is its burned remains and a toasty-looking lion skin over the roof. Ugh. "You know, as far as first dates go, this isn't even on my top ten of strangest interruptions."

"Maybe this is a sign," Percy says, pressing his lips together, his insecurity speaking for him. "Maybe we shouldn't try to date."

"What?" Apollo asks, sounding genuinely hurt. "Percy, I highly doubt this is related to the should and shouldn't of us pursuing a romantic relationship."

"Stuff like this is gonna keep happening," Percy squirms, looking down at the sand of the beach. They ended up here after Apollo picked him up from camp and the Nemean lion appeared, forcing them to swerve. The proximity to the water helps his nerves, but not nearly enough to stop him from reaching this panicked conclusion. "Like maybe this is a bad idea."

You're a god, and I'm a son of Poseidon. We must go off to monsters like crazy—"

"Most monsters don't approach gods—"

"—but most monsters have a grudge against me," Percy counters, and then winces. "And it's not like you being Lester *helped* your reputation—"

"I resent that."

"I just..." Percy crosses his arms, closing his eyes and hanging his head. "We're never gonna be *normal*. It's never going to be simple."

Apollo doesn't say anything, letting the weight of his words sink in. Then, fingers nudge Percy's chin, and he opens his eyes, turning his head to look up at Apollo's eyes. They're as blue as the summer sky above them, the prettiest eyes he's ever seen, with notes of gold and gray that make Percy breathless, have ever since he first took notice of them when Apollo was wearing lanky, awkward, adorkable Lester.

Even in another body, his eyes never changed, and Percy's heart throbs at the current sadness in them.

"Perseus," Apollo lets out, his voice a whisper. "I'll be honest with you. If I wanted something simple, I wouldn't be trying to date *you*."

Percy grimaces. "That's my point."

"You're being negative about something you can't change, Percy," Apollo leans in closer, stopping just a breath away from their lips meeting. "You're a demigod. There's always going to be something, but you can't let that uncertainty stop you from seeking out what you want."

Apollo presses his lips together, staring at Percy's stunned expression. He continues: "If you want me, that is. I'm a god, after all. Maybe you'd be better off with someone else, but I want you, Percy. I really do. And if eternity has taught me anything, if Lester taught me anything, it's that denying yourself, denying who you are, never lands you in a good path."

Percy feels his eyes water. He snuffles. Apollo's eyes widen with panic and he looks like he's about to apologize and take his words back, but Percy brings his hands up to his hair and pulls him in before a single word can slip from his lips, kissing him with a surge of passion that he can't help but breathe out against his mouth with a gasp when Apollo kisses him back.

Apollo pulls Percy in, wrapping his arms around his waist, until they're as flushed together as can be. Percy can smell leftover smoke, burned plastic and metal, the ocean and the sand under his shoes, but all he can focus on is the hot slide of Apollo's lips against his own, and the way he holds him like he never wants to let him go.

Percy can't resist; he runs his hands over Apollo's shoulders down to his chest and starts trying to pry open the buttons of the shirt he's wearing, because they were going to go to a fancy place for lunch and they both dressed up, but all Percy wants to feel that golden skin under his hands, to eliminate the layers between them.

"Now, this," Apollo breaks away from the kiss, grabbing Percy's wrists in his hands, meeting his eyes. He quirks an eyebrow, his mouth curling into a smirk sharp enough that Percy wants to cut himself on it even if it kills him. "This feels like a waste of time."

A blink, and Percy finds himself a *lot* less dressed than he was before. The afternoon sun hits his skin and he doesn't miss the leering way Apollo's eyes trace his body.

But before they continue, Percy presses a chaste kiss to Apollo's cheek. "You're right."

Apollo blinks. "I am?"

"I want simple," Percy says, holding Apollo's face in his hands, then tangling his fingers in his hair. He pulls him in and presses their foreheads together with a sigh. "But maybe my definition of simple is a little different from everyone else's. And maybe, that definition accounts for obnoxious, air-headed, blond sun gods, and dates ruined by Nemean lions and the worst use of an exploding arrow I've ever seen."

A laugh, bright and loud and joyful, like the first clear strum of a lyre. Apollo's hands run over his naked skin like there isn't enough of it, reverent and absent-mindedly, and Percy's sweating, but that, paired with the naked glee and devotion in Apollo's eyes, makes him shiver.

"You," Apollo chuckles, helpless, and brings their lips together again in another hot kiss. "You will be the best I've ever had, won't you?"

Percy licks his lips, smiling. "Try to keep up."

8. "We can't keep doing this."

"We can't keep doing this."

Apollo doesn't bother to turn away from the window and look at Percy; he just raises a single, perfect eyebrow and hums. "Define this?"

Percy closes his eyes and brings his hands up to his face, pressing his palms against his eyes, feeling like the weight of the sky is bearing down on him all over again. He brings his knees up to his chest, his stomach churning at the feeling of sheets over his naked skin, wincing at the soreness in his muscles.

"That's exactly it," Percy says, shaking his head, willing the knot in his throat down. "We're nothing."

"Nothing?" Apollo asks and his voice is cold, devoid of the heat that honeyed them just barely ten minutes ago, when he was whispering obscenities into Percy's ears. "That's a curious way to put it, Perseus. I didn't exactly invite myself over, if you recall. I wasn't the one who called you at three a.m and invited you to have an intimate bachelor party—"

"You shouldn't have come," Percy snaps out, raising his head to look at him, biting the inside of his cheek and resisting the urge to snifle. His eyes are watering, and his hands are shaking. "Why would you come? I'm getting married in two days, Apollo. Why did you do this?"

"Because you wanted me to," Apollo shrugs, and finally tears his eyes away from the moon and stars hanging from the sky to turn narrowed eyes at him, his mouth curled with displeasure, with annoyance. "Because you've been lying to yourself every single day for the last six months, except when you've been with me."

Percy's breath catches. His skin crawls; he wants that to not be true but there's a tug in his heart, being pulled in two directions. He has a feeling that no matter what he does, it will shatter. "You don't know that—"

“I do, actually,” Apollo leans off the windowsill and starts approaching the bed, still naked, still shameless, still beautiful like nothing Percy’s ever seen before, putting any work of art that’s ever existed to shame. “You’ve never been more honest with yourself than when you’ve been under me. I could taste it from every kiss, every tear, every drop of sweat...”

Percy scoots back, as far away as he can, until his back meets the headboard but Apollo just crawls onto the bed and pulls him by the ankles, strong and fast enough that Percy doesn’t get to fight it. Before he can even react, Apollo drapes himself over him, grabbing his wrists and pressing them down against the bed next to his head, his weight bearing down on Percy.

Apollo scowls down at him as Percy tries to wrestle his wrists free, getting bruises for his trouble when all Apollo does is squeeze down. He tries to use his hips and legs to turn them, but Apollo is unfazed to that, either, just tilting his head.

“You’re getting married in two days,” Apollo says, leaning down, breath brushing against his lips. Percy turns his head away before Apollo can try to kiss him, which results in Apollo pressing his lips against his cheek, chuckling dark and indulgent, like he thinks Percy’s just being a stubborn brat. “But in every single way except that, Percy, you’re *mine*. You’ve given yourself over to me, over and over—I’ve never stopped you but I’ve never forced you to do it either, and if you truly wanted me out of your life I wouldn’t be here.”

“No,” Percy lets out, and it sounds, to his own ears, like he’s begging, like he’s in denial. “No.”

“Yes,” Apollo shakes his head, laughing, and fury flares in Percy’s chest for a second but it vanishes, replaced by fear and uncertainty, when Apollo’s hands squeeze his wrist before he’s moving them up the bed, letting them rest atop of each other so he can grab them with a single hand. With his now free hand, Apollo takes Percy’s chin and digs his fingers in, forcing him to look at him.

Their eyes meet, gold and green, and a sick part of Percy shivers as he remembers his father telling him he has mother Rhea’s eyes, as he

remembers Artemis making a comment about how intimidated Zeus is by Apollo's mere gaze.

"I hate you," Percy whispers out, but he knows he's lying, and Apollo knows it too, judging by his sharp smile, the twist to the corner of his mouth that speaks of self-satisfaction. "I hate you so much."

Apollo doesn't dignify Percy's desperation, his aching heart filled with guilt, with an answer. Instead, he just leans in and bites Percy's lower lip, sucking it into his mouth. Despite it all, Percy lets out a shaky breath and almost instantly he's reciprocating to the hot, wet slide of their mouth.

His back arches when Apollo squeezes his wrists again, a gasp leaving his lips when Apollo moves on to trace his jaw, then his neck, sucking on already purple hickeys, biting Percy like he wants to consume him in his entirety, until there isn't a single part of him that doesn't belong to hi.

"Mine," Apollo whispers against his skin, and Percy closes his eyes, letting his tears fall. "You're *mine*."

He is. Percy never imagined that ruin could feel this hot, that it could look this beautiful, that it could feel this bright. But now he knows.

9. Leo: exhibitionism, being filmed, erotic photography

Notes for the Chapter:

notes: kinda explicit, dom/sub dynamics, bondage, choking, etc.

“Say happy birthday, Percy,” Apollo coos, holding up the Polaroid camera. All Percy does is let his eyes roll up and choke around the dildo gag in his mouth, and Apollo takes a picture of that anyways. After it’s printed out, he shakes it out and then sets it aside with the others, then slides off Percy’s legs.

A sound of protest cut off by a choked moan when Apollo reaches between his legs and presses the plug deeper inside him, his back arching, wrists pulling at the ropes that bind him to the bed. Apollo kneels off the bed and makes sure to get the right angle as only he can, his artistic eye never failing him as he takes a picture of the bow of Percy’s back, the sunlight coming through the window hitting him just right.

It’s a Polaroid; it’ll look a certain way anyhow, but that doesn’t mean Apollo can’t make it as otherworldly as the sight of a desperate, needy Percy is. He sighs, crawling back onto the bed, and takes hold of one of Percy’s bound hands, making him rest his fingers against his palm.

“Are we still good, love?” He asks, and Percy pauses in his squirming, just for a second, before tapping once with his fingers against Apollo’s skins. Apollo smiles at him, leaning over to kiss and lick his tears, watching the way Percy’s chest heaves and his lovely green eyes look him up and down. “Do you want to keep going?”

Percy nods and taps his hand again and Apollo wishes he could kiss him, really. As it is, he just moves back, off his space, and continues with the photo-shoot.

Percy had been so, so reluctant about this. His birthday is a sore spot and Apollo understands and respects that, but he wished for nothing more than to take Percy’s mind off things. Make him forget about the outside world

for a bit, help him be able to enjoy himself. This, well, this hadn't exactly been what he had in mind at first, he'd wanted to start off simpler, but the more Apollo suggested the more Percy seemed to cling to the idea of handing himself over to him.

"I trust you," Percy had whispered against his lips, just a couple days earlier. "And I love you. And there's no one else I'd want to spend my birthday with this year."

So Apollo got the ropes, he got the toys—and a blindfold, too, but Percy's eyes were too pretty for him to cover up and his tears are always so, so sweet.

The photography aspect...

"It's not a birthday without pictures," Apollo had claimed, right before they started. Percy had been wide-eyed and expectant all day, and Apollo was holding him by the scruff of his neck, and he could see him already doing things to him that he loved. "Besides, they'll do nicely as reference for all the paintings I want to work on..."

"You won't show them around, right?" Percy asked, his voice breathy.

Apollo raised a single eyebrow and pulled his head back by his hair, making him bare his neck. "And who told you I've ever wanted to share you, love?"

So here they were. Apollo headed over to the nightstand and grabbed the plug's remote; it was set on the lowest setting, just enough to make Percy rotate his hips, make him sweat, and make him want more. Make him want Apollo between his legs, instead of that tiny, snug little toy.

"Since it's your birthday," Apollo starts, and turns the toy onto the middle setting. "I suppose I'll play nice today."

Percy tries to gasp and his body tenses up, his legs stretching and spreading against the bed, toes curled, pulling at his bindings again.

Apollo captures that in picture, as well, making sure to get the strain on Percy's wrists and the beauty of his flushed, heaving chest right, and licks his lips as his eyes catch on the sight of Percy's hold clenching around the toy. He doesn't get a picture of that with the Polaroid; this requires his phone, in all it's lovely real-life image quality, though he'll have to make sure to print it out and delete its traces from technology later. Only he is allowed to see Percy's body like this.

Coming close again, Apollo runs his hand over one of Percy's thighs and sees his goosebumps flourish, his body curling into his touch. He's always so responsive and he's truly a beauty, but Apollo doesn't let that distract him from his mission.

He allows his fingers to dance over Percy's hip bones, his nails to burn a path into his skin. Then he moves inwards, and Percy's breath, what little he has with the toy, seems to leave him in a rush, his hips arching up to meet his touch, as it looks like Apollo might touch his dick.

Apollo is generous when he's on a good mood, and, once again, it's Percy's birthday, so he runs a single finger up and down his cock, just once, the camera pointed intently at Percy's face to get his exact expression of disappointment and desperation, his begging eyes, when Apollo draws his hand back and does nothing more.

"Be good," Apollo whispers, setting his hand on Percy's thigh again, digging his nails in. Percy squeezes his eyes shut and tries to swallow around the dildo, which compels Apollo to reach out and press against it, deeper down his throat. He holds it there and listens to Percy choke, letting several seconds pass until Percy's body stops fighting and it starts going lack.

He takes his hand away and loosens the dildo just to allow a little bit more air through, because this is their first time and Percy makes him so, so soft. Percy, already used to Apollo's obsession with watching him struggle to fill his lungs with air, breathes in carefully.

Then he opens his eyes and looks at Apollo with the most lovely, blissed out gaze, and Apollo coos again, glancing all over Percy's body. Percy

squeezed his legs shut as he choked him, and Apollo tilts his head at them. He gets another picture for the dozens he's already taken, and then smiles at Percy, throwing him a wink.

"I'll get the spreader bar," he says, watching Percy blush deeper than he already is. "Hm, and I think it's time you spent some time on your knees, don't you think?"

Percy just blinks at him and closes his eyes before tilting his chin upwards, baring his neck. With a laugh, Apollo realizes he's posing, and gets the shot Percy wants him to, his neck up for the taking, marked by Apollo's love bites and flushed red.

Ah, perhaps in the end, some things are just sweeter than a birthday cake.

10. "I'm only here to establish an alibi."

"For the record," Apollo says, still frozen in place, holding Riptide. "There's a good explanation for why I'm here."

Percy's head is pounding. His mouth tastes like blood and alcohol, and he can barely see through his blurry eyes and the darkness of the alley. He looks down at the head of the now dead date Percy was planning to bring home—a spoil of battle, and a nasty one at that—replaying the last ten minutes in his mind.

He'd gotten catfished and drugged up by an empousa. Just his fucking luck. "I'd like to hear it, to be honest."

"Uh," Apollo hesitates, clearly not expecting that from Percy. He drops Riptide to the ground—Percy has a fuzzy image in his head of the feeling of a blistering hot hand reaching into his pocket—and walks over to help him stand from where he's still on his back on the ground. Apollo's hands are as hot as in that memory, and Percy appreciates it even though he's wearing a coat. "I'm only here to establish an alibi."

"An alibi," Percy repeats. His mind is still fuggy, but that doesn't mean he's *dumb*. "What did you do?"

"I might have decided to take revenge against the empousai nest close by for tricking you this way on your behalf," Apollo shrugs, and Percy frowns at him. "But I can't be blamed if I'm with you. My cousin always gets pissy at me when I kill her servants, so—"

"You do know Hecate knows you can be at several places at once?" Percy asks, though he doesn't know why he's trying to play along with this, because that's the most bullshit lie he's ever heard Apollo say, and he claims he didn't in fact do anything wrong during the Trojan War. Apollo just directs a sheepish smile his way. "Apollo. What the fuck."

"You were drugged!" Apollo protests, as if he's trying to defend himself with such a flimsy excuse. "You were enchanted! Defenseless! How could I

let Percy Jackson die to the hands of such a puny, insignificant, miserable, ugly, unattractive, undeserving, and intolerable—?”

“Okay,” Percy breaks in, nodding. “Which is why you decided to put your hand in my pocket and steal my sword instead of, I don’t know. Warning me I was being tricked. Or just turning her to ash.”

Apollo hesitates. “It’s heroic.”

Percy snorts, crossing his arms. “And the nest? Is doing that for me also heroic?”

“Of course!” Apollo nods vigorously. “It is! I was just doing a friend a favor. You don’t mind, right?”

Percy takes stock of Apollo’s hands rubbing his arms up and down, gripping too tight to be casual and warming him up all the way to his toes. There’s a nervous, embarrassed glint to his eye, and Percy is usually a little clueless about these things himself, but Apollo is not good at having any subtlety whatsoever, and he figures that means they balance each other out rather nicely.

“You know,” Percy says, and his tone sounds foreboding even to his own ears, so it’s no wonder Apollo starts looking even more nervous and swallows. “If you were jealous, you could’ve just said so.”

Apollo gasps like Percy just insulted his hair. “I—jealous? Of a sad little insignificant monster? How could I?!”

“I’ve caught you staring at my ass before, if you recall,” Percy shakes his head. Apollo drops his hands from his arms so he can cross his arms, visibly squirming. Percy sighs. “You could’ve just asked me out.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Apollo claims, bringing a hand up to look at his nails as if feigning disinterest. “I would never do such a thing, Perseus, I respect you too much to ever dare imply that you’d give a god the time of day—”

Percy grabs him by the lapels of his frankly ridiculous bejeweled leather jacket and pulls him in against him, standing as close together as possible, and then he brings his hands up to his hair and pulls him down instead, as Percy tilts his chin upwards.

Their lips meet and Apollo lets out a noise like he's dying. Hands grip his waist and squeeze him, only for Apollo to walk him backwards until his back hits the alley wall and suddenly all Percy can feel is the press of Apollo strong, firm body, the big hands groping him like they resent the barrier of clothes over his skin, the heat of Apollo's mouth and the smell of cloves and honey filling his lungs.

Apollo bites his lip and sucks the remnants of blood from when that empousa elbowed him with a groan that sends a spark down Percy's spine. He moans, arching his back and digging his nails into the back of Apollo's neck, wanting him even closer.

Percy's spreading his legs to let Apollo slot in between them, but then a hand grabs his throat and pushes him back against the wall, his head hitting it a little too hard. Percy's hands come up to hold Apollo's wrist and this shouldn't be so hot, but it is, Percy decides, because when he meets Apollo's eyes they're molten gold.

He licks his lips and tastes honey and blood, the scent of cloves overpowering everything else. Apollo fixates on them like a starving man that hasn't had a meal in centuries, and Percy is *obsessed*.

"Percy," Apollo says, squeezing around his neck, perhaps a little tighter than he should. But Percy's breath catches and *gods*, he wants this. Apollo might have been caught staring at his ass, but Percy has been dreaming about his fingers in it for ages. "I'm not someone easy to get rid of."

Percy shrugs. "Neither am I."

Apollo raises his eyebrows, realization crossing his features, recognizing the threat for what it is. "Ah, well. My place or yours?"

This should be fun.

11. "It's always my fault, isn't it?"

Notes for the Chapter:

notes: explicit, implied voyeurism, kinda dub-con.

"Get off me," Percy whines, stretching under the sun. The heat just seems to flare and intensify but Percy refuses to open his eyes. "Apollo."

No response. Pressing his hand against his eyes and wiping the sweat off his neck with the other, Percy turns around to give his back to the sky and buries his face against his towel, groaning at how hot his skin gets in just under ten seconds.

Percy just wanted a tan. That's all. He wanted to lay down on the shore at Montauk with no one around and strip down and just bask in the sunlight, soak up energy, get that good vitamin D. He made space in his chaotic schedule for it, he made sure no one knew where he was going, he made sure Montauk was gonna be downright abandoned just so he could have some peace.

Instead of that, however, here he is, trying to get the attention of a voyeuristic sun god off him. In hindsight, maybe Percy should've made sure Apollo was busy when he decided to do this, but why the fuck would he think about that? He regularly forgets gods are also the *elements* around them, which means Apollo is, metaphorically and literally, a giant fucking ball of gas in the sky that is currently sexually harassing him from afar.

"I'm gonna kill you," Percy claims, but doubts he'll ever recover the energy to do so. He can't move. It's too hot. He had made the mistake of falling asleep when the air was still cool and there was still such a thing as shade around, but by the time he woke up that had changed rather drastically. "Motherfucker, you're gonna *dehydrate* me."

"Oh, it's always my fault when it's something *bad*, isn't it?" Apollo's voice says to his right and Percy jumps, sitting up and instantly swaying because wow, he's overheated. He's dizzy. It's quickly going from annoying to

making him nauseous, and he only feels better when Apollo grabs his shoulder and pulls him back until he's laying back down against his towel, looking up at golden curls and bare shoulders and blue eyes hidden behind sunglasses. "That's rather unfair, Perseus. I was just giving you what you wanted."

Percy glares at him. "A heatstroke?"

"Pleasure," Apollo says instead, and Percy does a double take, staring at him with incredulity. Apollo just shrugs, unapologetic, and ever worse so, shameless as he moves until he's slipping between Percy's spread legs because he can't stand the feeling of his thighs sticking together from how much he's sweating. "Why else would you splay yourself like that under my eyes?"

"I just wanted a tan!" Percy protests, and ignores the way his breath catches when Apollo leans forwards and rests both his hands to the side of his head, caging him in, pressing their hips together. He stumbles to let the rest of his sentence out. "How—how is this giving me pleasure?"

"Hm, sometimes," Apollo runs a single finger up and down Percy's neck, then trails it all the way down to the hem of Percy's flimsy swimsuit briefs that he would never wear about anyone—that he's only wearing now because he *wanted a tan*. "Sometimes heat and light just feel that good, in my opinion. I thought you'd be able to appreciate it more, as a son of the sea. After all, the water is always more pleasant when it's been under my touch."

Percy's not processing any of Apollo's words anymore. His touch burns and Apollo's hand slips lower with not even a second of hesitation, pressing against Percy's rather interested dick. He lets out a moan and pushes against Apollo's shoulder because truly, he just wanted a tan.

But gods, that feels overwhelming in all the right ways, and he can't help the little moan that falls from his lips when Apollo leans down and licks the sweat off his collarbone. "Fuck."

“I know,” Apollo laughs against his skin, and even his breath feels scalding. Apollo’s hand slips under his underwear now, and squeezes his cock; Percy’s back arches and he lets out a whine, thrusting his hips upwards, feeling another kind of heat spreading through him. “I thought you’d need more convincing than this, you know.”

“*Shut up,*” Percy snaps, and whimpers when Apollo stops stroking his cock and starts leaning off him, taking the weight of his body away. “What are you—?”

“Turn around,” Apollo orders, sending a shiver down his spine. Percy scrambles to do so, slow and dumb because the heat has sunk deep into his bones, but once he’s done Apollo instantly squeezes his ass, only to get rid of his shorts. He spreads Percy’s cheeks, and Percy would be blushing if his skin wasn’t already as red as it’s gonna get, at the thought that he’s baring his hole right at the sun. “Ah, you’re pretty everywhere, aren’t you?”

“Hurry up,” is all Percy says, his voice shaky. Apollo, perhaps sensing that Percy can’t handle this much longer without actually getting a heatstroke, just bows his head and licks his hole open, making an appreciative noise at how Percy arches his back into it.

Apollo takes mercy on him and makes quick work of it all. Percy can’t even *think* by the time Apollo’s fucking three fingers inside him, and he cums with a scream when Apollo removes them only to fuck his cock into him instead, keeping a hand on the back of Percy’s neck to push him against the ground and another on his hip to be able to fuck him out of his mind.

By the time they’re done, Percy’s delirious and dazed, breathing hard. Apollo lays over him, running his hand through his hair, never slipping out of him.

Finally, *finally*, a shade falls over Percy, making him groan. Apollo chuckles, kissing his shoulders.

“Hm,” Apollo lets out. “You look gorgeous when you’re sunkissed.”

Percy glares. “Fuck you.”

12. "Not any jewel in the entire kingdom could compare to you."

Notes for the Chapter:

notes: alpha/beta/omega, arranged marriage, physical violence (a slap, with blood), implied non-con (wedding night assumptions.), royalty au.

shamelessly inspired by a drabble the lovely ashilrak wrote on tumblr. you can find it in ao3 on her drabble collection, My Lover's The Sunlight, chapter 27, so check that out!

Also this got out of hand and I will be continuing this and uploading in a while. Keep your eyes peeled.

True to his word, his alpha—whose name Percy's come to know as Apollo—kept him on his arm for weeks before their wedding. He'd been gracious enough to show him around his estate himself, and despite his good looks and strong shoulders and big hands, Percy couldn't be swayed into swooning at him, no matter how much a part of him wanted to spread his legs every time he as much as caught a whiff of his scent.

"Feisty," Apollo had said to him, one night after parading Percy around like a trophy during a banquet, just two days before their wedding. His smirk had been sharp and not for the first time in the few weeks Percy had been there, he wanted to stab him for it. "You're determined to being difficult, aren't you?"

"Oh, I'm sorry," Percy snapped out, baring his teeth. The alpha only had to raise an eyebrow and growl at him and Percy immediately dialed it back, despite not wanting to. Some self-preservation instincts just weren't meant to be ignored. "Would you be happy if you were sold off to someone like *you*?"

It's far kinder than what Percy originally meant to say, and Apollo could probably tell, because he threw his head back and laugh, an unfairly

beautiful sound that wanted to seep warmth into Percy's veins.

"I like you," Apollo said, humming. "You might be an annoyance, but I rest easy knowing not any jewel in the entire kingdom could compare to you. You're pretty enough to look at."

"Fuck off," Percy bit out, and without a second of hesitation, Apollo rose his hand and slapped him hard enough to bust his lip. It was so fast, Percy stood there reeling, leaning against the wall behind him, tasting his own blood and feeling the sting on his skin, staring at Apollo.

He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the dots of Percy's blood from his hand and jacket. "Watch your tongue or I'll cut it off. Don't push your luck. You're my property, and as fun as you are, you're going to have to learn to behave, or I will make you."

"What—?" Percy let out, and watched Apollo's eyes flash with something cold and dangerous that instantly made him shut his mouth. He swallowed, and Apollo noticed, leaned in until Percy was pressed as close as possible to the wall. His alpha scent filled his lungs and sent a tingle down his spine, but he still held his chin high.

"What do you expect will happen from now on, little husband?" Apollo asked, tilting his head to the side with genuine curiosity. "Where do you think your defiance will land you, other than locked up and knocked up with my pups?"

Percy flushed with both anger and rage. "I'll at least drag you down with me."

"Oh," Apollo let out, a pleasantly surprised sound. "Are you taking me as a challenge?"

No. This wasn't what Percy wanted. But he couldn't back down now or he feared to find out if Apollo would make good on his promise to cut his tongue out. He certainly seemed capable. So Percy just nodded, glaring at him.

“I won’t be easy,” he said. “I won’t just spread my legs for you.”

Apollo’s eyes narrowed and then he stepped back, nodding, seemingly satisfied and done with the conversation. “Very well. But there’s a fix for everything. For now... rest well, Perseus. You’ll need the sleep for the wedding night. And make sure a maid gives you something for that bruise.”

Percy didn’t say anything. Apollo walked away, while he stood in the hallway for another good ten minutes. It’s the first time Apollo addressed him by name rather than some sweet meaningless words, or by his status as his future husband and omega. He had a sinking feeling he was getting himself into something he wasn’t completely equipped for.

But by that point he couldn’t do anything to prepare, because Percy woke up the next morning being ushered by handmaidens into hours and hours of wedding preparations. Not for the actual ceremony, no—Percy’s opinion there did not matter. Instead, he was fed teas and herbs meant to help with fertility and nerves, washed until his skin felt raw.

His hair was fixed up, his nails trimmed; he refused shaving and plucking but all Apollo had to do, without even coming into the room, was order for him to be tied up or drugged if necessary to make sure he was ready for him. After that threat, Percy stopped fighting the process quite so hard.

Percy was forced into bed early and told to rest up. There was a mess of creams on his cheek meant to clear up the yellowing bruise from Apollo’s hand, a teacup in his hand that he knew had something in it to help him sleep just from the sweet smell in an attempt to hide a bitter undertone. He thought about not drinking it. He thought about fighting this or trying to run away, but he knew it’d be futile.

After all, he was lucky, wasn’t he? Lucky to have an alpha, lucky to be going from a noble’s bastard to a noble’s bitch, like all the other good omega wives and husbands. If he behaved and gave Apollo good, strong alpha heirs and omegas to trade with, he might get luckier, and be able to see his family again.

But that was the thing, wasn't it? Percy couldn't just give in. He couldn't just lay back and bare his neck and spread his legs. If he was going to do this, he decided he might as well get what little satisfaction he can about making it as difficult as possible to be seen as just another pretty breeding doll.

13. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

Percy glances back at Apollo and blinks down at him, running his fingers through his hair. Glitter comes off and sticks to his hands but by now he's so used to it that he doesn't even blink.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" He asks, amused, because Apollo has his mouth parted open and he's playing with the fingers of Percy's other hand, caressing each one with the utmost attention. Apollo blinks as if he just snapped out of a trance. "Do I have something on my face?"

Apollo hums. "Just your beauty, of course."

"Dude," Percy snorts, but he's blushing. He doesn't think he'll ever be over how easily Apollo says these things, though he should probably be used to it by now. "What's gotten into you?"

Apollo sits up, leaning over and crowding his space. Percy instinctively tilts his chin for a kiss but Apollo stops just short, eyes dancing all over his face, seeing something he's clueless to. "My, can't I just stare at my favorite pretty little hero?"

"You always stare," Percy points out, and glances over Apollo's face, the glitter on his eyelids and the natural—for him—glow of his skin that makes him look more godly than usual. His eyes are gold shot through with blue today, and seem to grow warmer, fonder, the more Percy looks at him. "You just seem more into it today."

Apollo runs his hands through Percy's hair and sighs, pressing their foreheads together. "Something about you makes me want to bury myself in art. Poetry, film, canvases and clay... any and all mediums. I'd need the perfect charcoal to be able to capture you on paper and I'd have to mix paints for days in order to get your eye color right—and, gods, may my Muses be witness to it, the songs I'd write about you... you're a real, living and breathing work of art, Perseus."

Percy's mouth goes dry. He blinks, opens and closes his mouth several times as he blushes from head to toe, heat on his cheeks and his ears and his shoulders. He thought he'd seen all the pretty words Apollo had to offer, but here he is, proving him wrong.

"I..." He lets out, his heart beating fast in his ears. Apollo chuckles and presses a chaste kiss against his lips, then draws back, lays his head back over his lap and takes Percy's hands to bury them back in his hair, looking smug as ever. Percy swallows. "You're truly a god, aren't you?"

"Oh?" Apollo raises an eyebrow, sharp and perfect and elegant like Percy will never be, and noticing that makes his heart squeeze in his chest but he's having a hard time feeling bad about it, about the uncertainty of the future because, well...

"The real work of art here is you," Percy mumbles, feeling his cheeks flaming even hotter at the words. Apollo's mouth drops open, genuinely shocked, but all Percy does is bend and press his forehead against Apollo's again, shaking his head. "I know nothing about art... but I know you. And I think that's close enough."

Apollo isn't breathing. He doesn't need to, of course, but this feels special nonetheless. Percy sighs.

"I suppose," Apollo lets out, voice shaky and breathy, strangely distant, like he's still processing what just happened. "I suppose... worship is mutual, after all."

Percy snorts. "Took you long enough to figure that out."

14. "Why haven't you kissed me yet?"

Notes for the Chapter:

ah yes let's pretend i didn't get writer's block right on time to miss this
lmao

seriously tho guys thanks to much for reading! this challenge was a ton of fun, and i loved all your comments. thank you karli for collecting these prompts, good food.

anyways, enjoy!

It's moments like these that Percy wonders if he's made the right choices or not again.

There's something cutting about New York at the peak of winter, but it pales in comparison to the shape Apollo cuts against the grass of Central Park, arms crossed behind his head, all tanned skin and soaking up as much sunlight as possible in only a light coat and a sweater, while Percy's sitting next to him in a hoodie, a jacket, a coat, plus his mittens and scarf and even a hat that keeps falling off.

"You're insane," Percy grumbles, subtly scooting closer to him to steal a little warmth. Apollo just hums, unmoving and lazy, and Percy decides agreeing to come out in the cold like this was, in fact, a mistake. "What was the point of this?"

"Soaking up nature," Apollo replies, not even cracking a single eye open. Percy snorts because now that's an excuse if he's ever heard one, at least coming from Apollo, which prompts him another hum. "You don't believe me?"

"You hate winter," Percy points out, squinting up at the sunlight, clenching his teeth as another gush of cold wind passes over him to avoid them clattering. "Last I checked, at least. Did you have a change of heart when I wasn't looking?"

“Winter is terrible, barren, desolate and unkind,” Apollo says, just a hint of drama in his tone, and Percy snorts again, shaking his head, trying to force down the smile tugging at his lips. “But it is beautiful, in a way not even I can deny.”

Percy raises an eyebrow. “Is that so?”

“Everything dies in winter,” Apollo finally opens his eyes, a pale, almost crystal-clear blue greeting Percy due to the light. They don’t warm up to a brilliant blue or smoldering gold as usual, which tells Percy that Apollo’s truly taken right now, by some emotion that sits heavy in his brow, seeing as he loves to regulate his looks. “It reminds me there’s a natural cycle to everything. From the tiniest little plant, to even... people.”

“Some things thrive in winter,” Percy points out, not liking the downwards curl to the corner of Apollo’s mouth. He pauses, sighs, and decides to lay back on the grass, their shoulders brushing. Percy squints at how the sunlight hits more directly at this angle, but he appreciates the heat. “You need to stop thinking about death.”

“But he’s so beautiful,” Apollo replies, forcing amusement into his voice, and Percy shakes his head again before sliding his arm under Apollo’s to hold his hand, pressing in closer. “I mean it.”

“This winter melancholy of yours,” Percy whispers out, closing his eyes. “It makes me worry that you’re going to up and leave and disappear into light forever.”

“What a puzzling fear,” Apollo sighs. “You’re my only source of warmth during these months. How could I?”

“You can always leave,” Percy reminds him, because winter is cutting, Apollo’s is cutting, but reality is even more so, and Percy dreads to distance himself from it. “Maybe you don’t want to yet, but one day you might. And I won’t stop you, you do know that?”

Apollo remains quiet, and then he shifts, untangling their hands so he can lean on that arm and hover over Percy. Percy opens his eyes, greets

Apollo's pale gaze that is more akin to Artemis than to himself right now, and decides to bring his hands up to his hair, tangling his fingers in those curls.

"Maybe that's why death is so appealing as a concept to me, as of this winter," Apollo mumbles, eyes raking over Percy's face like he's trying to memorize it, the way he's done hundred, thousands of times by now. "Several times, I've wished I could follow my heart into Hades. But never as strongly as now. It would make everything easier."

"But you're needed here," Percy smiles at him. "Who else could save us from winter other than the sun, after all?"

Apollo's eyes warm, just so, reminding Percy of sunlight rippling over water. "I've been terribly sad, haven't I? No good company."

"You're always good company," Percy denies, then pauses, pressing his thumbs against Apollo's lips from under his mittens. He swallows, then says: "We fear the same thing, in the end, don't we?"

"I believe so," Apollo agrees, his voice soft. "Being left behind... it doesn't matter if it's the first time or the hundredth. It always hurts the same. And you always hate it."

Another cold wind sweeps Apollo's hair and Percy runs his hands through it to smooth it over, holding his face in his hands. He admires him for a second, and thinks once more of how terrible and cruel it is, that Apollo is so beautiful, so perfect, loves so kindly, yet he'll never have what he needs. He'll never have what he wants.

Percy doesn't think Apollo craves mortality. But it's plain, in the weight over his shoulders, that he'd like closure he can't even give himself. And something about that threatens to tear Percy up from the inside, but there's nothing he can do except love him to the best of his ability.

"Well," Percy lets out, swallowing again, this time around a knot in his throat. "At least I'll be kind to you."

“You don’t know that,” Apollo mumbles, and presses a kiss against his cold nose. “You might be cruel. You might be angry. You might kick me out before I can even tell you I intend to leave. But you’ll have loved me, by then, and that’ll be enough for me.”

“Living in memories, with memories...” Percy sighs. “It sounds like a pain. I don’t know how you do it.”

“It is painful,” Apollo nods, pressing their foreheads together. Apollo’s breath tickles his lips, and it occurs to Percy that he’s not all that cold anymore, not with Apollo all up in his space like this, and just the thought brings heat to his cheeks. “But just like the seasons, it’s a cycle I cannot escape, unless I’d like to go mad with loneliness. Winter comes, people die. We can only hope for a kinder spring, and a hot summer.”

Gods, Apollo makes Percy breathless. Deciding it’s best to close the conversation here, Percy sighs, and tries for a smile. “I do have one question, though.”

“I’m all ears,” Apollo says. “Always and forever, baby.”

Percy’s heart stutters, and his smile warms up, growing easy, growing natural. “Why haven’t you kissed me yet? I’m so cold, man. Say what you want about winter, but I’m freezing down here.”

Apollo laughs and it sounds like summer. Percy brings him down by gripping his hair, and perhaps he should be worried about the Central Park dryads around them gossiping about this little date, but he can’t find it in himself to care when he has the sun smiling against his lips and its heat warming him up from the inside out, filling the holes in his heart, soothing over the scars on his skin.

Percy debates whether he should tell Apollo that summer is his favorite season, but something about how Apollo grins down at him, happy and bright, makes him think that he already knows.